



## Erasmus Project

offered the chance to spend a week in Tychy, Poland, visiting our link school and in November 2015, another 6-8 pupils will visit Kortrijk, Belgium. On each occasion they will be accompanied by 3 of our teachers. All of the costs involved in Kortrijk Belgium. We are met by the fund. We will host only primary school children from the two schools in which is involved in what is May 2016.

called an 'Erasmus' project, and ours is the only such project in Obviously the trips will only involve a dozen or so of our pupils. We are However, I think it is incredibly fortunate to have been that children aged 10 or 11 will be selected for the Erasmus project have the opportunity to spend a week visiting a foreign school, acting as ambassadors for our school, in a fully funded project. Even if they are not selected or do not wish to visit Poland or Belgium, other pupils in Years 4-6 will have the opportunity to communicate with children across Europe and to participate fully in the project.

The project will allow children from all three schools to work on poetry, art, dance and drama activities which focus on a theme of anti war/anti conflict. The work will largely involve our pupils in Upper School. Twelve of our pupils in Year 6 talked to children in Poland and Belgium involved in it. This is solely down to the work of Mrs Walby, who is using skype last week. This week we used skype to have a shared Matthew and Charlotte Davies' carol recital.

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There will also be a trip to each of the schools involved in the project. Each school will host 6-8 pupils from the other two schools, for a week. During that week, the visiting children will work with those from their host country to put together a performance of poetry, dance, art etc and to focus solely on SATs which will be shown in a public tests. We have had a link school in the host town. In May 2015, 6-8 of our more mature pupils from Year 5 and 6 will be

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## Academy News

Thank you to the 19 parents who came along to our academy information evening. It was very useful to hear your views and to listen to the questions which you raised. I think everyone left the meeting feeling very positive about the move.

It is extremely exciting to learn that the Department for Education have granted us permission to proceed with our application to become a stand alone academy school. Each application is considered by a panel of educational experts. They look at a wide range of information in order to decide whether the school is strong enough to become an independent academy. They have decided that Godinton is strong enough and hence we are now proceeding with our application.

**I must emphasise once again that we are not being forced to become an academy because we are a failing school!! It is the exact opposite—we are choosing to become a stand alone academy—a path which is only open to those schools which the DfE consider to be the strongest performing.**

This will take a number of months. We are given a grant of £25,000 to cover all of the legal and professional costs associated with drawing up the required leases and agreements. We are hoping to convert on 1st March 2015, and we will keep you posted on our progress through the system.

op our involvement with other like minded schools across Europe.

## Complaints and Facebook

My apologies, as it is the wrong time of the year for this, but I am afraid I have to make a plea to parents on behalf of the staff. I hope you agree that we are a very open and welcoming school, and we try to foster a good working relationship with our parents. Inevitably there will be times when you disagree with us. When this happens, please talk to us. We may change our practice as a result of something you point out. Of course, it may be that I disagree with your opinion, and we don't change our policy despite what you say—but if you talk to us I guarantee your opinion will be considered.

The last few weeks have seen a number of ill informed comments from parents, particularly on facebook. Some have been moans about things we have or haven't done and some have been totally inaccurate. If you have a complaint, you aren't going to achieve anything unless you talk to us. We aren't ogres. If you have a concern, please tell us. If we can improve our practice as a result of what you suggest, we will do it. If we disagree with your suggestion, at least you will have an explanation for our actions. By all means, then moan about our decision on facebook—but at least raise it with us first! If you ignore us and simply post a complaint or moan to others, you aren't taking any positive step to address the cause of the issue.

Even more importantly, please check the October newsletter for the first de- you are saying is correct. tails). It's terrible the school doesn't do something for Red Nose Day!!! —but I receive complaints about continually asking for donations and getting the children to do silly things such as pink day. Etc etc.

Two parents were overheard complaining about the cost of the Year 4 trip to Canterbury and the fact that the school charged for entry to museums even though museum entry is free. They went on to discuss the fact that the school makes a profit out of school trips.

This is just untrue. Museum entry is not universally free. The Year 4 trip involved entry to museums which charge. The reality is that the cost of virtually every trip, visitor and event at the school is subsidised by the PTFA. It is extremely rare that you are ever charged the full amount for any type of activity.

Please appreciate how this comment made the staff feel. We are incredibly fortunate to have staff who willingly give of their time to run the myriad of activities we enjoy here, such as dad's cookery, Breakfast with Santa, camp out, sleep over, Christmas fair etc. We don't mind doing it because we feel it is part of the life of a school. But it galls to then hear accusations that we run trips to make a profit when in fact we subsidise them from PTFA funds that a great many of us give a lot of time to help raise.

I could go on— our involvement in the Erasmus project is apparently 'stupid' and parents should be told about it before the children (you were

But the core of the issue is that posting a complaint in public, without first attempting to get the concern addressed, is simply unproductive. We don't deserve it. We want to work with you—and both I and you are lucky to have a staff who work so hard in so many ways for our school. If we get something wrong, tell us. We will want to put it right.

And to give you a positive example of the alternative; one mum took umbrage with a facebook conversation and contacted me to clarify the situation regarding girls wearing boots to school. After chatting to her, I altered what is said on the uniform page of our website to try to make it as clear as possible and as accommodating to our children.

So please, only talk about us after you have talked to us. We try to make ourselves as accessible as possible in order for you to be able to raise concerns with us.

## Caterers

As part of their usual procedure of reviewing the contracts we have at school, the governors have decided to appoint a new catering company to manage the delivery of our school meals service.

For the past 6 years, the Contract Dining Company have been responsible for our school lunches. They have worked hard and always delivered a very good service, with which we have been very happy. However, after a review, we have decided to make a change and have appointed Independent Caterers to take over the contract for the next five years. The contract will be reviewed at the end of this period. The change is to try to bring about an even better service for our children.

I am sure that Independent Caterers will be sending home flyers to introduce themselves and outline their service. There won't be any reduction in the quality of the food, or degradation in the quality of the service. The change has been made to try to further improve what is already a very good service, which is largely thanks to Hazel and her team, who will all stay in place.

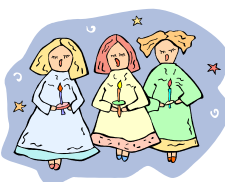


## Building Works

We hope to receive planning permission for our new build on 23rd January 2015. If it is granted, construction will start in the spring, with a target for completion of September 2015. Thus, we would begin the next academic year with a new entrance foyer, office area, medical room and disabled access toilet. I will let you know more news in the February newsletter.

## Nativities and Carols

I must say an enormous well done to all of the children who took part in this year's nativity plays and carol concert. I am always staggered by just how incredibly talented and brave you all are. For children aged 5, 6, 7 and 8 to get up on a stage at all is an incredible feat, but to do so and then sing, dance, remember so many words and to speak them so clearly, is amazing. On top of that, the Upper School children produced a truly beautiful carol concert in St Mary's church. Listening to their singing, on top of watching the Lower and Middle School nativities is always the highlight of my Christmas.



Well done to you all. Can I also add my thanks to the staff who worked so hard to prepare these productions. The children had a wonderful time because of what you achieved and I am sure a great many of us had a tear in our eyes watching them. Thank you.

## Electrical Works

KCC will complete the improvements to our electrical system over the break. We will return in January with newly installed, modern switches and fuses which will prevent a recurrence of the intermittent power failures which affected us in November.

## Pond Life

I must apologise to Mr Hygate and his dedicated band of helpers from the Nash, Hickman and Mace families, who toiled for many hours after school last summer to clear our wildlife area and to make everything accessible for the children. I meant to mention it long ago but forgot to do so. Thanks to their considerable efforts, our wildlife area is now just the right side of wild and a long way from jungle—which was not previously the case. Thank you for your efforts!

## Merry Christmas

It just remains for me to wish you all a very merry and happy Christmas. It is a privilege to be Headteacher to such a dedicated staff and the kindest and loveliest group of children it has ever been my good fortune to work with. I hope you enjoy every moment of the holidays and that Father Christmas brings you everything you deserve. On my part, please hope for QPR to beat Arsenal on Boxing Day.

**Merry Christmas!**